

Standardized Interim Progress Report

A. Project identifiers

1. Award number NA16fX1419
2. Grant Program/ CFDA# 11.439
3. Recipient organization: University of Alaska-Fairbanks
4. Principal investigator: Mary F. Willson
5. Project title: GEOGRAPHICAL ECOLOGY OF STELLER SEA LIONS AND EPHEMERAL HIGH-QUALITY PREY SPECIES IN SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA
6. Funding: federal: \$136,575; Match ---
7. Award period, from 1 June 01 to 31 May 03
8. Period covered by this report, from 1 June 01 to 31 Dec 01

B. Project summary

The underlying working hypothesis (for this project and a companion project under Glenn VanBlaricom) is that sea lion reproductive success is influenced by food resources, perhaps especially in spring when sea lions are preparing to go to the breeding rookeries on the outer coast. This project is testing one prediction of that underlying hypothesis: the spatial and temporal distribution of sea lions in spring is closely related to the distribution of forage-fish spawning runs.

The spatial and temporal distribution of Steller sea lions in Southeast Alaska in spring is being mapped with respect to the location of spring spawning runs of forage fishes, particularly eulachon and herring. These spawning runs provide an ephemeral but abundant and very high-quality (lipids, vitamins) source of food, and sea lions in Southeast Alaska are known to forage intensively at some of these spawning runs in spring. This project addresses the proposition that these forage-fish runs are important to sea lions throughout the region, as reflected by their spatial and temporal distribution.

C. Summary of progress and results

1. Task 1: Map (in GIS) , the known locations of sea lion haulouts and of spawning runs of eulachon and herring.
Task 2: Spring field surveys of the spatial and temporal distribution of sea lions before and during spawning runs, to document distributional responses of sea lions to prey aggregations.
2. Task 1 is mostly complete, using information obtained from Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, U. S. Forest Service, and local sources.
Task 2 is scheduled for spring (March-May) 2002.
3. –
4. none yet

D. Problems

We are on target and on schedule.

Prepared by: Mary F. Willson Date: 15 January 2002 (Delay in report necessitated by my being out of the country from September until the end of 2001).